

**Remarks/Arguments**

Reconsideration of this application is requested.

Claims 1-35 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith, et al. (U.S. 2002/0095306A1 or U.S. 2002/0042808A1) in view of Higgins, et al. (U.S. 5,754,671).

Smith discloses the following in paragraphs [0053] and [0054] of Patent Application 0095306:

[0053] If the user continues the session, the Postport system retains the relevant postal transaction session information in a manner that is linked to the user's assigned user ID, as discussed below. When the user later logs on to the Postport system from, for example, a terminal **188** at the postal station **176** using the assigned user ID, the system transfers the session to the terminal. The user then continues to enter and/or edit the mailing address and postage information and/or print the labels and the postage before ending the session.

[0054] The session transfer may be facilitated by assigning to a given user a coded physical identification token, such as a key fob **200** with a User ID included as a machine-readable barcode **201** (**FIG. 11**). The user presents his or her physical identification token to a scanner that is connected to the system through, for example, the work station node **180**. The system then prompts the user to supply his or her password and, after verification of the password, the system transfers the linked messages and thus the session to the terminal then in use. As discussed in more detail below, the system may also transfer the linked messages to the various other terminals in the same postal station, such that the user can readily transfer the session to another terminal that is connected to a printer, a postage meter, and so forth, by logging on using the assigned user ID. The user may thus take fully advantage of the Postport system's virtual post office services, even if he or she does not have the appropriate hardware and/or software to print the labels and postage.

Smith discloses the following in paragraph **[0033]** of Patent Application 0042808:

**“[0033]** The Postal Server may comprise a single server, or be one of a plurality of such servers, preferably interconnected for sharing data. Associated with each server is a database **171** on which the identify and other pertinent data such as physical (i.e. street) address, email address, unique identifier, telephone number, mail delivery preferences and other such data with respect to each of its customers is stored. The Postal Service itself may use access this database [sic] to obtain the current address of a customer for delivery of the physical mail in the case of mail that is found to have been misdirected or returned for insufficient or incorrect address. It may also access this database in order to ascertain the correct current address of a customer in the first instance. For example, third parties wishing to send mail to then customer may simply address the mail with the customer's unique Postal Identifier if one has been provided to the third party, or by means of the customer's email address, or by some other identifier or combination of identifiers corresponding to data associated with that customer in the database **171** and which uniquely identifies that customer. The Postal Service can then retrieve the physical address of that customer for delivery of the physical item to it, and may additionally provide notification to be customer concerning the item being sent as described in detail above. Alternatively, the Postal Service may, under suitable conditions, provide access to its database directly to the third party, which may then retrieve the necessary data for sending physical mail to the customer.”

Higgins discloses the following in column 4, line 34 to column 5, line 11:

“In determining the correct zip code it is important to note that the quality of the address interpretation depends on the success of the previous steps. Without the correct ABL, good segmentation and reasonable character recognition, there is little hope of finding the correct zip.

In order for the correct zip to be found, the following conditions have to be met. The correct candidate ABL has to be used. The number of characters in the word containing the zip has to clearly indicate that this word contains the zip code. That is, segmentation must recognize the word breaks around the zip code, which is quite difficult for hand images due to inconsistencies in handwriting. The characters have to be segmented correctly. Errors in character segmentation such as splitting a character into two separate

characters or combining two characters as one, preclude the possibility of good character recognition and, hence, address interpretation. Character recognition must produce the correct character. The confidence of the correct characters have to be good. This is not as important as having the correct character recognized, but it does allow more decisions on zip codes to be finalized.

An example of an image 64 passed through this conventional process of address block location segmentations, character recognition and address interpretation indicated by reference number 65 is shown in Fig. 5. In this illustrative example, a case where the address interpretation process could not make a determination due to the inaccurately recognized digit (13821 versus 13827).

Since 13821 is not a valid zip code, as can be verified with a database search, a bar code will not be assigned and so manual processing is required. It will be shown, hereinafter, how adaptive signal processing, in accordance with the present invention, was successfully applied to this problem.

In this example, the zip code has been recognized incorrectly and so the database search does not yield an exact match. Rather than assigning a potentially incorrect bar code, the letter is not assigned, i.e., no bar code is printed on the front of the envelope.

While the conventional OCR process treats each image independently, adaptive OCR, in accordance with the present invention, attempts to exploit any statistical characteristics of the mail stream. If one could gather real-time statistics on the mail stream, it seems plausible that this data could be exploited to achieve higher recognition rates.

Neither Smith nor Higgins, taken separately or together, discloses or anticipates the steps of claim 1, and those claims dependent thereon, namely, of capturing by the carrier the name and physical address of the recipient and the sender in the form of an image; transmitting the image to a data center where the image is processed by translating the image consisting of text and graphics to selected alphanumerics; and

notifying by the data center to the recipient of the expected delivery of the deposited mail and indicating the selected alphanumerics of the translated image.


Higgins discloses a method for the cursive address recognition of mail pieces. In Smith, the recipient is not notified of the expected delivery of deposited mail while indicating the selected alphanumerics of the translated image. Smith also requires that the (sender) user print a user ID included as a machine-readable barcode 201 so as to capture the identity of each mailpiece during the inbound postal tracking process, to enable accurate data message linkage prior to the physical delivery of the mail piece to the (recipient) user. Furthermore, Smith requires this same ID code be associated (added) to any other postal data object (message, etc.) so that it can be later associated (linked) at the mail piece recipient's computer display. Smith does not resolve how he can produce the accurate merging of more than one such data objects for a sender that submits more than one mail piece with the same personal ID code into the postal system on the same day.

Applicants do not claim a method in which a sender printed personal ID code is added to each mailpiece, and the ID code is captured by the post. Applicants claim a method in which the carrier captures the name and physical address of the recipient and sender in the form of an image and the translation by a data center of the name and physical address of the recipient into an e-mail address.

Appln. No.: 09/818,792  
Amdt. Dated September 13, 2004  
Reply to Office Action dated July 13, 2004

In view of the above, claims 1-35 are patentable. If the Examiner has any questions, will he please telephone the undersigned at the telephone number noted below.

Respectfully submitted,



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